

VOLUME I.

1620-1664



VOLUME II.

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could be applied. The eastern wind still more impetuously driving the flames forward. Nothing but the Almighty power of God was able to stop them; for vain was the help of man.

5th September, 1666. It crossed toward Whitehall; but oh! the confusion there was then at that Court! It pleased his Majesty to command me, among the rest, to look after the quenching of Fetter-lane end, to preserve (if possible) that part of Holborn, while the rest of the gentlemen took their several posts, some at one part, and some at another (for now they began to bestir themselves, and not till now, who hitherto had stood as men intoxicated, with their hands across), and began to consider that nothing was likely to put a stop but the blowing up of so many houses as might make a wider gap than any had yet been made by the ordinary method of pulling them down with engines. This some stout seamen proposed early enough to have saved near the whole city, but this some tenacious and avaricious men, aldermen, etc., would not permit, because their houses must have been of the first. It was, therefore, now commended to be practiced; and my concern being particularly for the Hospital of St. Bartholomew, near Smithfield, where I had many wounded and sick men, made me the more diligent to promote it; nor was my care for the Savoy less. It now pleased God, by abating the wind, and by the industry of the people, when almost all was lost infusing a new spirit into them, that the fury of it began sensibly to abate about noon, so as it came no farther than the Temple westward, nor than the entrance of Smithfield, north: but continued all this day and night so impetuous toward Cripplegate and the Tower, as made us all despair. It also broke out again in the temple; but the courage of the multitude persisting, and many houses being blown up, such gaps and desolations were soon made, as, with the former three days' consumption, the back fire did not so vehemently urge upon the rest as formerly. There was yet no standing near the burning and glowing ruins by near a furlong's space.

The coal and wood wharfs, and magazines of oil, rosin, etc., did infinite mischief, so as the invective which a little before I had dedicated to his Majesty and published,*

*The *Fumifugium*.

JOHN EVELYN

g warning what probably might be the issue of suffering those shops to be in the city was looked upon as prophecy.

The poor inhabitants were dispersed about St. George's, and Moorfields, as far as Highgate, and several in circle, some under tents, some under miserable and hovels, many without a rag, or any necessary rails, bed or board, who from delicateness, riches, and accommodations in stately and well-furnished houses, now reduced to extreme misery and poverty.

In this calamitous condition, I returned with a sad heart to my house, blessing and adoring the distinguishing mercy of God to me and mine, who, in the midst of all this ruin, like Lot, in my little Zoar, safe and sound.

September, 1666. Thursday. I represented to his Majesty the case of the French prisoners at war in my custody, and besought him that there might be still the care of watching at all places contiguous to unseized houses. It is not indeed imaginable how extraordinary vigilance and activity of the King and the Duke was, laboring in person, and being present to command, reward, or encourage workmen; by which he showed affection to his people, and gained theirs. Having disposed of some under cure at the Savoy, I returned to Whitehall, where I dined at Mr. Offley's, the groomer, who was my relation.

September, 1666. I went this morning on foot from Whitehall as far as London Bridge, through the late Fleet street, Ludgate hill by St. Paul's, Cheapside, Exchange, Newgate, Aldersgate, and out to Moorfields, thence through Cornhill, etc., with extraordinary difficulty, clambering over heaps of yet smoking rubbish, and frequently striking where I was; the ground under my feet so hot, it even burnt the soles of my shoes. In the meanwhile his Majesty got to the Tower by water, to demolish the houses about the gruff, which, being built entirely of wood, had they taken fire and attacked the White Tower, where the magazine of powder lay, would undoubtedly not only have beaten down and destroyed all the houses, but sunk and torn the vessels in the river, and rendered the demolition beyond all expression for several miles about the country.

On my return, I was infinitely concerned to find that

goodly Church, St. Paul's—now a sad ruin, and that beautiful portico (for structure comparable to any in Europe, as not long before repaired by the late King) now rent in pieces, flakes of large stones split asunder, and nothing remaining entire but the inscription in the architrave showing by whom it was built, which had not one letter of it defaced! It was astonishing to see what immense stones the heat had in a manner calcined, so that all the ornaments, columns, friezes, capitals, and projectures of massy Portland stone, flew off, even to the very roof, where a sheet of lead covering a great space (no less than six acres by measure) was totally melted. The ruins of the vaulted roof falling, broke into St. Faith's, which being filled with the magazines of books belonging to the Stationers, and carried thither for safety, they were all consumed, burning for a week following. It is also observable that the lead over the altar at the east end was untouched, and among the divers monuments the body of one bishop remained entire. Thus lay in ashes that most venerable church, one of the most ancient pieces of early piety in the Christian world, besides near one hundred more. The lead, ironwork, bells, plate, etc., melted, the exquisitely wrought Mercers' Chapel, the sumptuous Exchange, the august fabric of Christ Church, all the rest of the Companies' Halls, splendid buildings, arches, entries, all in dust; the fountains dried up and ruined, while the very waters remained boiling; the voragos of subterranean cellars, wells, and dungeons, formerly warehouses, still burning in stench and dark clouds of smoke; so that in five or six miles traversing about I did not see one load of timber unconsumed, nor many stones but what were calcined white as snow.

The people, who now walked about the ruins, appeared like men in some dismal desert, or rather, in some great city laid waste by a cruel enemy; to which was added the stench that came from some poor creatures' bodies, beds, and other combustible goods. Sir Thomas Gresham's statue, though fallen from its niche in the Royal Exchange, remained entire, when all those of the Kings since the Conquest were broken to pieces. Also the standard in Cornhill, and Queen Elizabeth's effigies, with some arms on Ludgate, continued with but little detriment, while the vast iron chains of the city streets, hinges, bars, and gates

of prisons, were many of them melted and reduced to cinders by the vehement heat. Nor was I yet able to pass through any of the narrow streets, but kept the widest; the ground and air, smoke and fiery vapor, continued so intense, that my hair was almost singed, and my feet insufferably surbated. The by-lanes and narrow streets were quite filled up with rubbish; nor could one have possibly known where he was, but by the ruins of some Church, or Hall, that had some remarkable tower, or pinnacle remaining.

I then went towards Islington and Highgate, where one might have seen 200,000 people of all ranks and degrees dispersed, and lying along by their heaps of what they could save from the fire, deploring their loss; and, though ready to perish for hunger and destitution, yet not asking one penny for relief, which to me appeared a stranger sight than any I had yet beheld. His Majesty and Council indeed took all imaginable care for their relief, by proclamation for the country to come in, and refresh them with provisions.

In the midst of all this calamity and confusion, there was, I know not how, an alarm begun that the French and Dutch, with whom we were now in hostility, were not only landed, but even entering the city. There was, in truth, some days before, great suspicion of those two nations joining; and now that they had been the occasion of firing the town. This report did so terrify, that on a sudden there was such an uproar and tumult that they ran from their goods, and, taking what weapons they could come at, they could not be stopped from falling on some of those nations whom they casually met, without sense or reason. The clamor and peril grew so excessive, that it made the whole Court amazed, and they did with infinite pains and great difficulty, reduce and appease the people, sending troops of soldiers and guards, to cause them to retire into the fields again, where they were watched all this night. I left them pretty quiet, and came home sufficiently weary and broken. Their spirits thus a little calmed, and the affright abated, they now began to repair into the suburbs about the city, where such as had friends, or opportunity, got shelter for the present to which his Majesty's proclamation also invited them.

Still, the plague continuing in our parish, I could not, without danger, adventure to our church.

10th September, 1666. I went again to the ruins; for it was now no longer a city.

13th September, 1666. I presented his Majesty with a survey of the ruins, and a plot for a new city, with a discourse on it; whereupon, after dinner, his Majesty sent for me into the Queen's bed-chamber, her Majesty and the Duke only being present. They examined each particular, and discoursed on them for near an hour, seeming to be extremely pleased with what I had so early thought on. The Queen was now in her cavalier riding-habit, hat and feather, and horseman's coat, going to take the air.

16th September, 1666. I went to Greenwich Church, where Mr. Plume preached very well from this text: "Seeing, then, all these things shall be dissolved," etc: taking occasion from the late unparalleled conflagration to remind us how we ought to walk more holy in all manner of conversation.

27th September, 1666. Dined at Sir William D'Oyly's, with that worthy gentleman, Sir John Holland, of Suffolk.

10th October, 1666. This day was ordered a general Fast through the Nation, to humble us on the late dreadful conflagration, added to the plague and war, the most dismal judgments that could be inflicted; but which indeed we highly deserved for our prodigious ingratitude, burning lusts, dissolute court, profane and abominable lives, under such dispensations of God's continued favor in restoring Church, Prince, and People from our late intestine calamities, of which we were altogether unmindful, even to astonishment. This made me resolve to go to our parish assembly, where our Doctor preached on Luke, xix, 41: piously applying it to the occasion. After which, was a collection for the distressed losers in the late fire.

18th October, 1666. To Court. It being the first time his Majesty put himself solemnly into the Eastern fashion of vest, changing doublet, stiff collar, bands and cloak, into a comely dress, after the Persian mode, with girdles or straps, and shoestrings and garters into buckles, of which some were set with precious stones* resolving

* This costume was shortly after abandoned, and laid aside; nor does any existing portrait exhibit the King so accoutered.

never to alter it, and to leave the French mode, which had hitherto obtained to our great expense and reproach. Upon which, divers courtiers and gentlemen gave his Majesty gold by way of wager that he would not persist in this resolution. I had sometime before presented an invective against that unconstancy, and our so much affecting the French fashion, to his Majesty; in which I took occasion to describe the comeliness and usefulness of the Persian clothing, in the very same manner his Majesty now clad himself. This pamphlet I entitled "*Tyrannus, or the Mode*," and gave it to the King to read. I do not impute to this discourse the change which soon happened, but it was an identity that I could not but take notice of.

This night was acted my Lord Broghill's tragedy, called "*Mustapha*," before their Majesties at Court, at which I was present; very seldom going to the public theatres for many reasons now, as they were abused to an atheistical liberty; foul and indecent women now (and never till now) permitted to appear and act, who inflaming several young noblemen and gallants, became their misses, and to some, their wives. Witness the Earl of Oxford, Sir R. Howard, Prince Rupert, the Earl of Dorset, and another greater person than any of them, who fell into their snares, to the reproach of their noble families, and ruin of both body and soul.* I was invited by my Lord Chamberlain to see this tragedy, exceedingly well written, though in my mind I did not approve of any such pastime in a time of such judgments and calamities.

21st October, 1666. This season, after so long and extraordinary a drought in August and September, as if preparatory for the dreadful fire, was so very wet and rainy as many feared an ensuing famine.

28th October, 1666. The pestilence, through God's mercy, began now to abate considerably in our town.

30th October, 1666. To London to our office, and now had I on the vest and surcoat, or tunic, as it was called,

*Among the principal offenders here aimed at were Mrs. Margaret Hughes, Mrs. Eleanor Gwynne, Mrs. Davenport, Mrs. Uphill, Mrs. Davis, and Mrs. Knight. Mrs. Davenport (Roxolana) was "my Lord Oxford's Miss;" Mrs. Uphill was the actress alluded to in connection with Sir R. Howard; Mrs. Hughes ensnared Prince Rupert; and the last of the "misses" referred to by Evelyn was Nell Gwynne.